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Applicant: Travis J. Parry et al.

Serial No.: 09/873,094

Filed: June 1, 2001

Docket No.: 10005949-1

Title: METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR PROMOTING USE OF CONSUMABLE GOODS IN IMAGING DEVICES

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A method to promote the use of consumables in an imaging device including a consumption detecting device, comprising:
detecting consumption by the imaging device of individual quantities of the consumables using the consumption detecting device;
generating a reward when the consumption of a predefined collective quantity of the individual quantities of the consumables has been detected; and
basing a value of the reward on the individual quantities of each consumable detected as being consumed by the imaging device.
2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, and wherein generating the reward comprises printing a coupon using the imaging device.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, and further comprising connecting to a global computer network and obtaining, via the global computer network, a certificate verifying the reward.
4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, and wherein connecting to the global computer network and obtaining the certificate verifying the reward is performed automatically in response to detecting the predefined collective quantity.
5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, and wherein detecting consumption of the consumables comprises calculating an estimated consumption of the consumables.
6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, and wherein the consumables can be provided by a plurality of separately identified sources, the method further comprising detecting at least one of the identified sources of the consumables, and basing the reward at least in part on whether the predefined collective quantity of the consumables that has been consumed comprises consumables provided by the at least one identified source.

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7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, and wherein at least one of the consumables is defined by a standard retail price per unit, and further wherein the reward allows the user to obtain the at least one consumable at a discount over the standard retail price.
8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, and wherein at least one of the consumables comprises sheets of media, and wherein detecting consumption of the consumables comprises counting sheets of the media consumed by the imaging device.
9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, and wherein at least one of the consumables comprises an image forming substance, wherein the imaging device forms an image by depositing a quantity of pixels of the image forming substance, and wherein detecting consumption of the consumables comprises at least one of calculating, measuring, or estimating the deposited quantity of pixels of the image forming substance.
10. (Previously Presented) A method to promote the use of a plurality of consumables in an imaging device including one or more consumption detecting devices, comprising:
- detecting consumption by the imaging device of individual quantities of the plurality of consumables using at least one of the one or more consumption detecting devices, each of the consumables having individual consumable values;
 - calculating a cumulative consumption value of the consumables based on the individual consumable values and the individual quantities of the consumables consumed by the imaging device;
 - when the cumulative consumption value is at least a predefined value, rewarding a user of the imaging device with a reward defined by a value; and
 - basing the value of the reward on the individual consumable values of the consumables and the individual quantities of each consumable detected as being consumed by the imaging device.

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11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, and wherein the consumables comprise at least one of sheets of media handled by the imaging device and an image forming substance deposited by the imaging device.

12. (Previously Presented) A method to promote the use of a consumable in a plurality of imaging devices, each of the plurality of imaging devices including a consumption detecting device, the method comprising:

detecting consumption of individual quantities of the consumable by each of the plurality of imaging devices using the consumption detecting device of each imaging device; and

when the consumption of a predefined collective quantity of the individual quantities of the consumable by the plurality of imaging devices has been detected, generating a reward.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, and wherein generating the reward comprises transmitting a message to an individual notifying the individual of the reward.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, and wherein generating the reward comprises printing a reward coupon using at least one of the plurality of imaging devices.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, and wherein the consumable can be provided by a plurality of separately identified sources, the method further comprising detecting at least one of the identified sources of the consumable, and basing the reward at least in part on whether the consumable which has been consumed comprises the consumable provided by the at least one identified source.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, and wherein the plurality of imaging devices collectively consume a plurality of consumables, the method further comprising:

detecting consumption by the plurality of imaging devices of individual quantities of the plurality of consumables;

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when the consumption of a predefined collective quantity of the individual quantities of the plurality of consumables by the plurality of imaging devices has been detected, generating a reward defined by a value; and

basing the value of the reward on the individual quantities of each consumable that has been detected as being consumed by the plurality of imaging devices.

17. (Previously Presented) Apparatus for providing the user of an imaging device with a reward, comprising:

a consumable consumption detection device configured to detect individual quantities of each of a plurality of consumables that are consumed by the imaging device and to generate consumption signals in response thereto, each of the consumables having individual consumable values;

an electronic writeable memory device;

an electronic readable memory device configured to contain a reward message; and

a processor configured to receive the consumption signals and to store a cumulative consumption value in the electronic writeable memory device, the cumulative consumption value being a function of the individual consumable values of the consumables and relative quantities of consumption of the plurality of consumables, the processor further configured to read from the electronic readable memory device the reward message when the cumulative consumption value is at least equal to a predetermined reward value, and to visually display the reward message to the user,

wherein a value of the reward is based on the individual consumable values of the consumables and the relative quantities of consumption of the plurality of consumables.

18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17, and further comprising a display device, and wherein the processor visually displays the reward message using the display device.

19. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 17, and wherein the electronic readable memory device is a readable-writeable memory device, the apparatus further comprising a computer network communication device, and wherein the processor is further

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configured to access a global computer network via the computer network communication device when the cumulative consumption value is at least equal to the predetermined reward value and to obtain from the global computer network the reward message, and to store the reward message in the readable-writeable memory device.

20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19, and wherein the computer network communication device is an embedded web server located within the imaging device.

21. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 17, and wherein at least one of the plurality of consumables comprises sheets of media upon which the imaging device can form an image, and further wherein the consumable consumption detection device comprises a sheet counter configured to count sheets of media on which the imaging device has formed an image.

22. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 17, and wherein at least one of the plurality of consumables comprises an image forming substance, and wherein the imaging device forms an image by depositing pixels of the image forming substance on sheets of media, and further wherein the consumable consumption detection device comprises a pixel counter configured to count the number of pixels of the image forming substance which have been deposited on sheets of media to form an image.

23. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 17, and wherein at least one of the plurality of consumables can be provided by a plurality of suppliers, at least one of which can be identified by inspection of the consumable, the apparatus further comprising a consumable identification detection device configured to inspect the consumable and detect whether the consumable has been supplied by the at least one supplier and to generate a supplier identification signal in response thereto.

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24. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 23, and wherein the processor is further configured to receive the supplier identification signal, and wherein the cumulative consumption value is further a function of the received supplier identification signal.

25. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable storage medium for use by a processor configured to execute computer executable instructions to generate a reward in response to the consumption of consumables by an imaging device, the medium holding computer executable instructions to:

detect consumption by the imaging device of individual quantities of a plurality of consumables;

when the consumption of a predefined collective quantity of the individual quantities of the consumables has been detected, generate a reward; and

base a value of the reward on the individual quantities of each consumable detected as being consumed by the imaging device.

26. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 25, and wherein the instruction to generate the reward comprises an instruction to print a coupon using the imaging device.

27. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 25, the medium further holding computer executable instructions to connect to a global computer network and to obtain, via the global computer network, a certificate verifying the reward.

28. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 27, and wherein the instruction to connect to the global computer network and obtain the certificate verifying the reward is configured to be executed automatically in response to a detection of the predefined collective quantity.

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29. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 25, and wherein the instruction to detect the consumption of the plurality of consumables comprises an instruction to calculate an estimated consumption of the consumables.

30. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 25, and wherein at least one of the consumables can be provided by a plurality of separately identified sources, the medium further holding computer executable instructions to detect at least one of the identified sources of the at least one consumable, and to base the reward at least in part on whether the detected collective quantity comprises a consumable provided by the at least one identified source.

31. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 25, and wherein at least one of the consumables comprises sheets of media, wherein the instruction to detect the consumption of the consumables comprises an instruction to count sheets of the media consumed by the imaging device.

32. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 25, and wherein at least one of the consumables comprises an image forming substance, wherein the imaging device forms an image by depositing a quantity of pixels of the image forming substance, wherein the instruction to detect the consumption of the consumables comprises an instruction to at least one of calculate, measure, or estimate the deposited quantity of pixels of the image forming substance.

33. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable storage medium for use by a processor configured to execute computer executable instructions to generate a reward in response to the consumption of consumables by an imaging device, the medium holding computer executable instructions to:

receive consumption signals from a consumption detection device configured to detect individual quantities of a plurality of consumables which are consumed by the imaging device, each of the consumables having individual consumable values;

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calculate a cumulative consumption value as a function of the individual consumable values of the consumables and relative quantities of consumption of the consumables, and store the cumulative consumption value in a readable memory device;

determine when the cumulative consumption value is at least a predetermined reward value;

generate the reward when the cumulative consumption value is at least the predetermined reward value; and

visually display the reward,

wherein a value of the reward is based on the individual consumable values of the consumables and the relative quantities of consumption of the consumables.

34. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 33, the medium further holding computer executable instructions to connect a computer network communication device to a global computer network and obtain from the global computer network a reward file, and to use the reward file to generate the reward.

35. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 33, the medium further holding computer executable instructions to receive a supplier identification signal from a consumable identification detection device configured to inspect at least one of the consumables and detect whether the at least one consumable has been supplied by a predetermined supplier, and to use the supplier identification signal to calculate the cumulative consumption value.

36. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 33, the medium further holding computer executable instructions to cause the imaging device to print a copy of the reward.